

THE NATURE OF GOD'S ANGER

PSALM 79

Introduction:

Survivors of tragic events often write books describing their experience.

They always have a human interest. You find yourself identifying with them, and wondering how you would have responded in the same circumstance.

They sometimes take on the dimension of a hero in our eyes.

The author of this psalm was a survivor, but he did not see himself as a hero.

He does not offer any details about how he survived that terrible holocaust that enveloped Jerusalem when the armies of Babylon finally broke through their defenses and utterly destroyed the city. His concern is why the city was destroyed, the lingering suffering that the destruction produced, and what will God do about it. His concern is with the anger of the Lord—How long will His anger continue? Is there any way to appease the anger of the Lord?

Our generation has dismissed the anger of the Lord. We find political and natural explanations for the tragedies that befall us. We blame Mother Nature when a hurricane destroys cities along our coast. We blame the problems on the structure of the earth when earthquakes level a city and take many lives. We blame our wars on the political shortcomings of our leaders,

or on the corruption of foreign leaders. The survivor saw the hand of God in such destructive events. The God that he worshipped was capable of anger. He was not a passive observer to the violence that covered the earth. He was not a disinterested party when armies marched. The God of Israel is the God of all nations, and He is capable of great anger and wrath. And woe to the people who do not understand the nature of the divine anger!

Listen to the survivor and he will give you needed insights into the nature of the anger of the Lord.

I. THE ANGER OF THE LORD DESTROYS. (V. 1-3)

1. God uses means in His destruction.

In this case He used the army of Babylon. God is not limited in the means that He can use.

2. God has purpose in His destruction. (v. 8)

The destruction of God's anger has construction in mind. He wants to bring those who are the objects of his anger to the place that they will receive the constructive work of His grace in their lives.

II. THE ANGER OF THE LORD REACTS TO SIN (V. 4-8)

1. His anger reacts out of love.

God gets angry because He is "jealous".

2. His anger reacts out of justice.

God gets angry because He is just. This is the hope of the suffering survivor—he knows that God is just and will react to the extreme suffering of the survivors.

III. THE ANGER OF THE LORD REQUIRES ATONEMENT AND REPENTANCE FOR REMOVAL. (V. 9-13)

1. God must atone.

His mercy must prompt Him to atone. The cost of atonement will be great and God must bear the cost. The atonement will be at His expense. This is the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God made His Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, or the means of removing His wrath from a world in rebellion.

2. The sinner must repent.

God's atoning work is not enough in itself to remove sin. The sinner must come home to God like the prodigal son from the far country. The sinner must come with a commitment to worship and serve the Lord for the rest of life, and to bear witness to the world of the mercy and saving grace of our God.

God has made the atonement, but we must take the step of repentance and faith. We must receive from the gracious hand of God what His mercy has provided.

